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PRESS RELEASE

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MS-13 Members Indicted on Federal Racketeering Charges

WASHINGTON - Four members of MS-13, a notorious and violent Hispanic gang, have been charged by a federal grand jury in a 19-count indictment with conspiracy to commit violent crimes in aid of racketeering, including murder in aid of racketeering, and various firearms violations within the District of Columbia between 2006 and 2007, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Chief Cathy L. Lanier, and Mark X. McGraw, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Washington Field Division, announced today.

The alleged leaders of the conspiracy, William Cordova, 23, also known as "Centinella" or "Mario," and Jose Gutierrez, 19, also known as "Astuto" or "Marco," are also charged with maiming in aid of racketeering and threats to commit crimes of violence in aid of racketeering. Cordova, Gutierrez, and the remaining defendants, William Osorio-Rivas, 20, also known as "Macklin," and Melvin Sorto, 21, also known as "Killer" or "Fantasma," are further charged with numerous overt acts in furtherance of the conspiracy that culminated in the murder of Edwin Ventura, on April 22, 2007.

The indictment was returned under seal on June 10, 2008, and unsealed today following the initial appearance of Sorto before U.S. Magistrate John Facciola this afternoon. Sorto was arrested on June 11, 2008, by the Washington D.C. Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force. Cordova and Gutierrez were previously arrested. On June 19, 2008, all three defendants, Cordova, Sorto, and Gutierrez will be arraigned before the Honorable Judge Richard J. Leon, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Osorio-Rivas will have to be extradited to the United States. If convicted of the charges, the defendants face the possibility of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Additionally, the defendants are charged in a death penalty eligible count.

"Gang violence and all of its accompanying destructive behavior is an ill that will not be tolerated in our nation's capital," stated U.S. Attorney Taylor. "This indictment serves as a wake-up

call to those who join gangs and engage in violent criminal conduct that there are serious consequences for such activity.”

“The indictment of these four gang members clearly reflects ICE’s steadfast commitment to ridding our communities of the violent transnational street gangs that have polluted our neighborhoods and instilled fear in our citizens for far too long,” said ICE Special Agent in Charge McGraw. “Those who seek to rob our children of the innocence of their youth should be on notice that we will continue working with our law enforcement partners at every level to identify, target and arrest anyone involved in this sort of criminal behavior.”

“The Metropolitan Police Department is devoting personnel and resources to specifically combat this type of violent crime. Today’s indictment is the result of the hard work of our detectives. We have our eye on MS-13 and are committed to bringing them to justice,” said Chief Lanier.

The indictment alleges that Cordova, Gutierrez, Osorio-Rivas, and Sorto, were members and associates of a criminal organization known as La Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS-13. MS-13 is a violent gang involved in a variety of criminal activities including assaults, threats, extortion, witness intimidation, aggravated assault, assaults with intent to kill, and murder in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and elsewhere. The indictment further charges that Cordova, Gutierrez, Osorio-Rivas, and Sorto, conspired together, and with others, to commit violent crimes in aid of racketeering in the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and elsewhere.

The indictment alleges that the four defendants, together with other members of MS-13, conspired to kill members of rival gangs and persons that interfered with, or threatened, MS-13, for the purpose of gaining entry to or maintaining and increasing their position within MS-13. As a result of the conspiracy, the indictment charges the defendants with numerous overt acts and violent crimes committed in aid of racketeering. The indictment charges all four defendants with the murder of Edwin Ventura and the assault with a dangerous weapon of Nelson Maldonado, on April 22, 2007, in the 2900 block of Sherman Avenue, NW, Washington D.C. Cordova and Gutierrez are further charged with the maiming of Feliciano Flores-Esquina Flores, on June 1, 2007, in the 3000 block of Georgia Avenue, NW, Washington D.C., and also with threatening to commit crimes of violence. Cordova is further charged with the assault with a dangerous weapon of Dennis Diaz-Gutierrez, Josue Levia, and Jhosimar Alvarez-Torrez, on July 30, 2006, in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. All four defendants are charged with using firearms during the commission of violent crimes committed in aid of racketeering.

The indictment is the latest result of an investigation initiated by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the Washington D.C. Joint Fugitive Task Force.

In announcing the indictment, U.S. Attorney Taylor, Chief Lanier, and ICE Special Agent in

Charge McGraw praised the efforts of the ICE Special Agents who investigated this matter, and MPD Homicide Detectives Jed D. Worrell, Jacqueline Middleton, and Eduardo Voysest. MPD Detectives Emilio Martinez, Elba Longo, and Washington D.C. Joint Fugitive Task Force Officer Eduardo Vasquez. Also commended were U.S. Attorney's Office support personnel Nadi Ishman, Kim Hall, and Mia Beamon, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gilberto Guerrero, Jr., Nihar Mohanty, Fernando Campoamor-Sanchez, and Sharon Donovan who investigated the case. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gilberto Guerrero, Jr. and Nihar Mohanty.

An Indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

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